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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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Dan Whiting (202) 224-8078
Sid Smith (208) 342-7985

Climate Change: California Dreamin'
by Senator Larry Craig

This time of the year, when someone mentions warming, what usually comes to mind is putting another log in the fireplace. In Washington, D.C., global warming has become the hot topic of the political season because two California Members of Congress have assumed control of our energy policy in both the House and the Senate.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has put “big oil” at the top of her 100-hour agenda hit list. Senator Barbara Boxer is calling for a “sea change” on climate change in the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee that she will now chair. Both congresswomen subscribe to taking a punitive approach to our nation’s energy supply for those who don’t subscribe to their definition of what are acceptable energy sources – only certain kinds of renewable energy.

While the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which I helped write, contains strong incentives for research and development of renewable sources, these types of energy currently supply less than two percent of our electricity and less than five percent of our transportation fuel. Hydroelectric and nuclear power provide about 30 percent of our nation’s power combined, and although they don’t produce greenhouse gasses, they apparently aren’t acceptable to these two leaders. I find this troubling.

Over the past decade I have been more involved in climate change issues than most members of Congress. So when I saw the threat of a California-style reordering of our nation’s energy policy and supply, I made it my business to become a watchdog on the EPW Committee, to provide a voice of Idaho reality in the face of political hysteria, and to protect Idahoans from the higher energy prices and increased regulations that Californians have become accustomed to.

Idahoans understand that affordable electricity can be produced without producing greenhouse gasses, because nearly all the power produced in our state is from hydroelectric, wind, and geothermal sources. France uses existing technologies to produce 80 percent of their electricity from emission-free nuclear power. In the Northwest, we’ve gotten very good at producing affordable power, so our businesses can compete and our economy will flourish. The competitiveness of our economy relies on producing more power, more efficiently and cheaply than the rest of the world. As a result of using better technology, we do it more cleanly than the rest of the world, too.

As a nation we still produce more than half of our electricity from coal, and effectively all of our transportation fuel comes from oil. In reality, few other sources are economically competitive or sufficiently available right now. These hydrocarbon sources produce pollution as well as carbon dioxide

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(CO₂), a greenhouse gas. Throughout the 1970s and ‘80s, we greatly reduced the amount of pollution in this country, but not the CO₂. But we are already in the process of transitioning from hydrocarbons, and the Energy Policy Act of 2005 was an acceleration away from this dependence – for our security and for the well being of the global climate.

It’s possible to reduce mankind’s global footprint on the climate with tools we have today. For example, we can promote smart and efficient power use. We can also encourage using the cleanest available technologies that are economically competitive. And to move America into the future, we need to research and develop new technologies that will make our economy even cleaner. That, to me, makes “Idaho-sense.”

California-sense says that we should restrict, instead of overcome: cap our energy supply and tax those who use more, make do with less power, and whatever you do, don’t even think of using nuclear power!

I have enjoyed making energy policy as a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee. In 2007 I joined the EPW Committee to ensure that this nation’s energy and environmental policies continue to work toward the goals of a competitive, secure, clean and growing energy future. When it comes to climate change, we don’t need more California Dreamin’.